

This matter strikes at the heart of our Constitution. If this act is allowed to stand, it will fundamentally change the entire character of the legislative and executive functions on the most momentous decision that any Nation can make. It will take us down a dark and bloody road that the American Founders fought so hard to avoid.

THE BUDGET CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Madam Speaker, today, I intend to use my 5 minutes to talk about the budget crisis that is before Congress. We have to make a decision whether to continue the operations of government. That's the debate that is now under way with the continuing resolution, and we soon face the question of whether or not Congress will extend the debt limit.

Now, let me start by acknowledging the obvious. America has to get its fiscal house in order. How we got here is debated, but certain things are indisputable. We have two wars that have been paid for on the credit card. We had tax cuts that went to the high-income Americans that are on the credit card. We recently extended them at the cost of \$700 billion to the deficit. We had irresponsible behavior on the part of Wall Street that required rescuing the financial system in America so that Main Street could fight and survive another day. And then that led to a collapse in the economy and 10 percent unemployment that required governmental action in order to try the stabilize the economy. We have a long way to go in restoring the economy, but that has to be our first mission.

The Republican proposal on how to address this budget in these continuing resolutions will fail. The reason it will fail is because it fails to do what must obviously be done if we're going to have long-term fiscal stability, and that is put everything on the table. The cuts that are proposed by the Republican majority, unwise as they are, cannot do the job.

The total focus of the Republican effort in its budget plan to restore fiscal balance is to attack 12½ percent of the budget, the non-defense discretionary portion of the budget. It happens to be programs that are benefiting Americans in many cases, but leaving aside the debate about whether we should cut low-income heating assistance for the most vulnerable Americans or cut Pell scholarships that allow aspiring young people to enter the middle class, we could cut the entire non-defense discretionary portion of the budget and we could continue to have an annual deficit of \$1 trillion.

So, if we're going to get to budget balance and fiscal stability, which we can do, we have to put everything on the table, and that means tax expenditures. The tax breaks that have been written into the Tax Code over the

years by Republicans and Democrats alike actually cost taxpayers more than the entire appropriations budget, and many of us are asking the question: Why is it that we are going to be continuing \$5 billion in tax breaks to very profitable oil companies when oil is now selling at \$106 a barrel? Why are we allowing that but at the same time cutting low-income heating assistance and turning down the thermostat of cold Vermonters and cold Americans?

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Why is it that hedge fund millionaires and billionaires literally pay a lower tax rate than their chauffeurs, their drivers, their cooks, their secretaries?

We have got to put tax expenditures on the table. We have to put the defense budget on the table. How is it that America is spending over \$700 billion a year? How is it that we are putting two wars on the credit card and not facing the fiscal responsibility to tell Americans how we are going to pay for that but are simply putting that burden on generations of Americans that will come after us?

We have to reform health care. The first act of this Congress was to repeal the health care bill. And debate as we might about what's the best way forward on health care, no one can dispute that our first goal has to be to bring down the cost of health care; because whatever kind of system we have, if the cost is increasing two and three and four times the rate of inflation, job growth, and profits, it's not sustainable. And the health care bill that has been repealed by this Congress, this House of Representatives, that is going to add over \$200 billion to the deficit over 10 years.

So we have to put everything on the table. That's defense. That's tax expenditures. That's entitlements and how we can reform them so we can maintain benefits, not slash benefits. And Democrats have to be willing to come to the table on the traditional line items in the appropriations bill where we have to kick the tires and find ways to be responsible. If we do that by putting everything on the table, we have a chance to be successful and be on a path to fiscal stability and solvency. Refusing to put everything on the table guarantees failure.

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY, JR., 36TH CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARTER. Madam Speaker, Congressman SILVESTRE REYES and I would like to take this opportunity to honor General George W. Casey, Jr., the 36th Chief of Staff of the United States Army, for his extraordinary dedication to duty and service to our Nation.

As cochair of the House Army Caucus, Congressman REYES and I have

had the privilege of working with General Casey as he led our Army through a difficult period of transformation, simultaneously rebalancing and modernizing the Army while our Nation was engaged in two wars. After 40 years of distinguished service, General Casey will retire from active military duty in June of 2011.

General Casey is the epitome of the consummate professional, exemplifying the special qualities exhibited by all transformational military leaders: a strong sense of duty, honor, courage, and love of country.

General Casey continued the tradition of military service to his country that was started by his father, Major General George W. Casey, Sr., commander of the First Cavalry Division, who died in a helicopter crash on July 7, 1970, in Vietnam. That same year, General Casey was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Infantry from Georgetown University's Army Reserve Officers Training Corps.

He went on to excel in a variety of command and staff assignments, including notable participation in Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. He commanded the First Armored Division in 1999 to 2001, served as the director of Strategic Plans and Policy (J-5) of the Joint Staff in 2001, and director of the Joint Staff in 2003.

Following these Joint Staff assignments, General Casey served as the 30th Vice Chief of Staff for the Army until June 2004. From 2004 until 2007, General Casey commanded the Multinational Force Iraq, a coalition of 32 countries, where he oversaw the transition of three separate Iraqi Governments. He set the conditions for transition to Iraqi-led security, which, in turn, enabled the successful drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq. He was a powerful influence for democratic change in Iraq, steadily improving the security and political environment in the country so that, in 2005, Iraq was able to conduct open and transparent national elections.

On April 10, 2007, General Casey became the Chief of Staff of the United States Army. Since assuming this position, General Casey's leadership and commitment have contributed immeasurably to ensuring America's Army remains the preeminent military force in the world. As the Army's Chief of Staff, General Casey has provided the strategic leadership and vision to complete the most comprehensive transformation of the Army since World War II, building versatile and modular units and improving the capabilities of soldiers to conduct full-spectrum operations.

General Casey has proven himself a tremendous wartime leader, demonstrating unselfish devotion to our Nation and to the soldiers he leads. Responsible for the organization, training, readiness, mobilization, and deployment of Army forces, he has worked tirelessly to successfully restore balance to a force stretched and